MARJORIE FLEMING

JOHN BROWN

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Brown, John
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A SKETCH

BEING THE PAPER ENTITLED

"PET MARJORIE: A STORY OF CHILD LIFE FIFTY YEARS AGO"

BY JOHN BROWN M.D.
AUTHOR OF "RAB AND HIS FRIENDS."

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NOTE.

THE separate publication of this sketch has been forced upon me by the 'somewhat free use' made of it in a second and thereby enlarged edition of the 'little book' to which I owe my *introduction* to Marjorie Fleming—but nothing more;—a 'use' so exceedingly 'free' as to extend almost to everything with which I had ventured perhaps to encumber the letters and journals of that dear child. To be called 'kind and genial' by the individual who devised this edition has, strange as he may think it, altogether failed to console me. Empty praise without the solid pudding is proverbially a thing of nought; but what shall we say of praise, the emptiness of which is aggravated, not merely by the absence, but by the actual abstraction of the pudding?

This little act of conveyancing—this 'engaging compilation' as he would have called it—puts me in mind of that pleasant joke in the preface to 'Essays by Mr. Goldsmith:' 'I would desire in this case, to imitate that fat man whom I have somewhere heard of in a shipwreck, who, when the sailors prest by famine, were taking slices from his body, to satisfy their hunger, insisted with great justice on having the first cut for himself.'

I have to thank the proprietors of the *North British Review* for permitting this reprint.

J. B.

To

MISS FLEMING

to whom I am indebted for all its materials

THIS MEMORIAL

of her dear and unforgotten

MAIDIE

is gratefully inscribed.

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MARJORIE FLEMING.

ONE November afternoon in 1810—the year in which *Waverley* was resumed and laid aside again, to be finished off, its last two volumes in three weeks, and made immortal in 1814, and when its author, by the death of Lord Melville, narrowly escaped getting a civil appointment in India—three men, evidently lawyers, might have been seen escaping like schoolboys from the Parliament House, and speeding arm-in-arm down Bank Street and the Mound, in the teeth of a surly blast of sleet.

The three friends sought the *bield* of the low wall old Edinburgh boys remember well, and sometimes miss now, as they struggle with the stout west wind.

The three were curiously unlike each other. One, 'a little man of feeble make, who would be unhappy if his pony got beyond a foot pace,' slight, with 'small, elegant features, hectic cheek, and soft hazel eyes, the index of the quick, sensitive spirit within, as if he had the warm heart of a woman, her genuine enthusiasm, and some of her weaknesses.' Another, as unlike a woman as a man can be; homely, almost common, in look and figure; his hat and his coat, and indeed his entire covering, worn to the quick, but all of the best material; what redeemed him from vulgarity and meanness, were his eyes, deep set, heavily thatched, keen, hungry, shrewd, with a slumbering glow far in, as if they could be dangerous; a man to care nothing

for at first glance, but somehow, to give a second and not-forgetting look at. The third was the biggest of the three, and though lame, nimble, and all rough and alive with power; had you met him anywhere else, you would say he was a Liddesdale store-farmer, come of gentle blood; 'a stout, blunt carle,' as he says of himself, with the swing and stride and the eye of a man of the hills—a large, sunny, out-of-door air all about him. On his broad and somewhat stooping shoulders, was set that head which, with Shakspere's and Bonaparte's, is the best known in all the world.

He was in high spirits, keeping his companions and himself in roars of laughter, and every now and then seizing them, and stopping, that they might take their fill of the fun; there they stood shaking with laughter, 'not an inch of their body free' from its grip. At George Street they parted, one to Rose Court, behind St. Andrew's Church, one to Albany Street, the other, our big and limping friend, to Castle Street.

We need hardly give their names. The first was William Erskine, afterwards Lord Kinnedder, chased out of the world by a calumny, killed by its foul breath,—

> 'And at the touch of wrong, without a strife,
> Slipped in a moment out of life.'

There is nothing in literature more beautiful or more pathetic than Scott's love and sorrow for this friend of his youth.

The second was William Clerk,—the *Darsie Latimer* of *Redgauntlet;* 'a man,' as Scott says, 'of the most acute intellects and powerful apprehension,' but of more powerful indolence, so as to leave the world with little more than the report of what he might have been,—a humorist as genuine, though not quite so savagely Swiftian as his brother Lord

Eldin, neither of whom had much of that commonest and best of all the humours, called good.

The third we all know. What has he not done for every one of us? Who else ever, except Shakspere, so diverted mankind, entertained and entertains a world so liberally, so wholesomely? We are fain to say, not even Shakspere, for his is something deeper than diversion, something higher than pleasure, and yet who would care to split this hair?

Had any one watched him closely before and after the parting, what a change he would see! The bright, broad laugh, the shrewd, jovial word, the man of the Parliament House and of the world; and next step, moody, the light of his eye withdrawn, as if seeing things that were invisible; his shut mouth, like a child's, so impressionable, so innocent, so sad; he was now all within, as before he was all without; hence his brooding look. As the snow blattered in his face, he muttered, 'How it raves and drifts! On-ding o' snaw—ay, that's the word—on-ding—'. He was now at his own door, 'Castle Street, No. 39.' He opened the door, and went straight to his den; that wondrous workshop, where, in one year, 1823, when he was fifty-two, he wrote *Peveril of the Peak*, *Quentin Durward*, and *St. Ronan's Well*, besides much else. We once took the foremost of our novelists, the greatest, we would say, since Scott, into this room, and could not but mark the solemnizing effect of sitting where the great magician sat so often and so long, and looking out upon that little shabby bit of sky and that back green, where faithful Camp lies.[1]

[1] This favourite dog 'died about January 1809, and was buried in a fine moonlight night in the little garden behind the house in Castle Street. My wife tells me she remembers the whole family in tears about the grave as her father himself smoothed the turf above Camp, with the saddest face she had ever seen. He had been engaged to dine abroad that day, but apologized, on account of the death of "a dear old friend." '—Lockhart's *Life of Scott.*

He sat down in his large, green morocco elbow-chair, drew himself close to his table, and glowered and gloomed at his writing apparatus, 'a very handsome old box, richly carved, lined with crimson velvet, and containing ink-bottles, taper-stand, etc., in silver, the whole in such order, that it might have come from the silversmith's window half an hour before.' He took out his paper, then starting up angrily, said, '"Go spin, you jade, go spin." No, d— it, it won't do,—

> "My spinnin' wheel is auld and stiff,
> The rock o't wunna stand, sir,
> To keep the temper-pin in tiff
> Employs ower aft my hand, sir."

I am off the fang.[1] I can make nothing of *Waverley* to-day; I'll awa' to Marjorie. Come wi' me, Maida, you thief.' The great creature rose slowly, and the pair were off, Scott taking a *maud* (a plaid) with him. 'White as a frosted plum-cake, by jingo!' said he, when he got to the street. Maida gambolled and whisked among the snow, and his master strode across to Young Street, and through it to 1, North Charlotte Street, to the house of his dear friend, Mrs. William Keith of Corstorphine Hill, niece of Mrs. Keith of Ravelston, of whom he said at her death, eight years after, 'Much tradition, and that of the best, has died with this excellent old lady, one of the few persons whose spirits and *cleanliness* and freshness of mind and body made old age lovely and desirable.'

Sir Walter was in that house almost every day, and had a key, so in he and the hound went, shaking themselves in the lobby. 'Marjorie! Marjorie!' shouted her friend, 'where are ye, my bonnie wee croodlin doo?' In a moment a bright, eager child of seven was in his arms, and he was kissing her all over. Out came Mrs. Keith. 'Come

[1] Applied to a pump when it is dry, and its valve has lost its 'fang;' from the German, *fangen*, to hold.

yer ways in, Wattie.' 'No, not now. I am going to take Marjorie wi' me, and you may come to your tea in Duncan Roy's sedan, and bring the bairn home in your lap.' 'Tak' Marjorie, and it *on-ding o' snaw!*' said Mrs. Keith. He said to himself, 'On-ding—that's odd—that is the very word.' 'Hoot, awa! look here,' and he displayed the corner of his plaid, made to hold lambs—(the true shepherd's plaid, consisting of two breadths sewed together, and uncut at one end, making a poke or *cul de sac*). 'Tak' yer lamb,' said she, laughing at the contrivance, and so the Pet was first well happit up, and then put, laughing silently, into the plaid neuk, and the shepherd strode off with his lamb,—Maida gambolling through the snow, and running races in her mirth.

Didn't he face 'the angry airt,' and make her bield his bosom, and into his own room with her, and lock the door, and out with the warm, rosy, little wifie, who took it all with great composure! There the two remained for three or more hours, making the house ring with their laughter; you can fancy the big man's and Maidie's laugh. Having made the fire cheery, he set her down in his ample chair, and standing sheepishly before her, began to say his lesson, which happened to be—'Ziccotty, diccotty, dock, the mouse ran up the clock, the clock struck wan, down the mouse ran, ziccotty, diccotty, dock.' This done repeatedly till she was pleased, she gave him his new lesson, gravely and slowly, timing it upon her small fingers,—he saying it after her,—

'Wonery, twoery, tickery, seven;
Alibi, crackaby, ten, and eleven;
Pin, pan, musky, dan;
Tweedle-um, twoddle-um,
Twenty-wan; eerie, orie, ourie,
You, are, out.'

He pretended to great difficulty, and she rebuked him

with most comical gravity, treating him as a child. He used to say that when he came to Alibi Crackaby he broke down, and Pin-Pan, Musky-Dan, Tweedle-um Twoddle-um made him roar with laughter. He said *Musky-Dan* especially was beyond endurance, bringing up an Irishman and his hat fresh from the Spice Islands and odoriferous Ind; she getting quite bitter in her displeasure at his ill behaviour and stupidness.

Then he would read ballads to her in his own glorious way, the two getting wild with excitement over *Gil Morrice* or the *Baron of Smailholm;* and he would take her on his knee, and make her repeat Constance's speeches in *King John*, till he swayed to and fro, sobbing his fill. Fancy the gifted little creature, like one possessed, repeating—

> 'For I am sick, and capable of fears,
> Oppressed with wrong, and therefore, full of fears;
> A widow, husbandless, subject to fears;
> A woman, naturally born to fears.'
>
> 'If thou that bidst me be content, wert grim,
> Ugly and slanderous to thy mother's womb,
> Lame, foolish, crooked, swart, prodigious—'.

Or, drawing herself up 'to the height of her great argument'—

> 'I will instruct my sorrows to be proud,
> For grief is proud, and makes his owner stout.
> Here I and sorrow sit.'

Scott used to say that he was amazed at her power over him, saying to Mrs. Keith, 'She's the most extraordinary creature I ever met with, and her repeating of Shakspere overpowers me as nothing else does.'

Thanks to the unforgetting sister of this dear child, who has much of the sensibility and fun of her who has been in her small grave these fifty and more years, we have now before us the letters and journals of Pet Marjorie

—before us lies and gleams her rich brown hair, bright and sunny as if yesterday's, with the words on the paper, 'Cut out in her last illness,' and two pictures of her by her beloved Isabella, whom she worshipped; there are the faded old scraps of paper, hoarded still, over which her warm breath and her warm little heart had poured themselves; there is the old water-mark, 'Lingard, 1808.' The two portraits are very like each other, but plainly done at different times; it is a chubby, healthy face, deep-set, brooding eyes, as eager to tell what is going on within, as to gather in all the glories from without; quick with the wonder and the pride of life; they are eyes that would not be soon satisfied with seeing; eyes that would devour their object, and yet childlike and fearless; and that is a mouth that will not be soon satisfied with love; it has a curious likeness to Scott's own, which has always appeared to us his sweetest, most mobile and speaking feature.

There she is, looking straight at us as she did at him—fearless and full of love, passionate, wild, wilful, fancy's child. One cannot look at it without thinking of Wordsworth's lines on poor Hartley Coleridge :—

> 'O blessed vision, happy child!
> Thou art so exquisitely wild,
> I thought of thee with many fears,
> Of what might be thy lot in future years.
> I thought of times when Pain might be thy guest,
> Lord of thy house and hospitality;
> And Grief, uneasy lover! ne'er at rest,
> But when she sat within the touch of thee.
> Oh, too industrious folly!
> Oh, vain and causeless melancholy!
> Nature will either end thee quite,
> Or, lengthening out thy season of delight,
> Preserve for thee by individual right,
> A young lamb's heart among the full-grown flock.'

And we can imagine Scott, when holding his warm plump

little playfellow in his arms, repeating that stately friend's lines :—

> 'Loving she is, and tractable, though wild,
> And Innocence hath privilege in her,
> To dignify arch looks and laughing eyes,
> And feats of cunning; and the pretty round
> Of trespasses, affected to provoke
> Mock chastisement and partnership in play.
> And, as a fagot sparkles on the hearth,
> Not less if unattended and alone,
> Than when both young and old sit gathered round,
> And take delight in its activity,
> Even so this happy creature of herself
> Is all-sufficient; solitude to her
> Is blithe society; she fills the air
> With gladness and involuntary songs.'

But we will let her disclose herself. We need hardly say that all this is true, and that these letters are as really Marjorie's as was this light brown hair; indeed you could as easily fabricate the one as the other.

There was an old servant—Jeanie Robertson—who was forty years in her grandfather's family. Marjorie Fleming, or, as she is called in the letters, and by Sir Walter, Maidie, was the last child she kept. Jeanie's wages never exceeded £3 a year, and, when she left service, she had saved £40. She was devotedly attached to Maidie, rather despising and ill-using her sister Isabella—a beautiful and gentle child. This partiality made Maidie apt at times to domineer over Isabella. 'I mention this' (writes her surviving sister) 'for the purpose of telling you an instance of Maidie's generous justice. When only five years old—when walking in Raith grounds, the two children had run on before, and old Jeanie remembered they might come too near a dangerous mill-lade. She called to them to turn back. Maidie heeded her not, rushed all the faster on, and fell, and would have been lost, had her sister not pulled her back, saving her life, but tearing her clothes. Jeanie flew on Isabella to

"give it her" for spoiling her favourite's dress ; Maidie rushed in between crying out, "pay (whip) Maidjie as much as you like, and I'll not say one word ; but touch Isy, and I'll roar like a bull !" Years after Maidie was resting in her grave, my mother used to take me to the place, and told the story always in the exact same words.' This Jeanie must have been a character. She took great pride in exhibiting Maidie's brother William's Calvinistic acquirements when nineteen months old, to the officers of a militia regiment then quartered in Kirkcaldy. This performance was so amusing that it was often repeated, and the little theologian was presented by them with a cap and feathers. Jeanie's glory was 'putting him through the carritch' (catechism) in broad Scotch, beginning at the beginning with 'Wha made ye, ma bonnie man?' For the correctness of this and the three next replies Jeanie had no anxiety, but the tone changed to menace, and the closed *nieve* (fist) was shaken in the child's face as she demanded, 'Of what are you made?' 'DIRT' was the answer uniformly given. 'Wull ye never learn to say *dust*, ye thrawn deevil?' with a cuff from the opened hand, was the as inevitable rejoinder.

Here is Maidie's first letter before she was six. The spelling unaltered, and there are no 'commoes.'

'MY DEAR ISA,—I now sit down to answer all your kind and beloved letters which you was so good as to write to me. This is the first time I ever wrote a letter in my Life. There are a great many Girls in the Square and they cry just like a pig when we are under the painfull necessity of putting it to Death. Miss Potune a Lady of my acquaintance praises me dreadfully. I repeated something out of Dean Swift, and she said I was fit for the stage, and you may think I was primmed up with majestick Pride, but upon my word I felt myselfe turn a little birsay—birsay is a word

which is a word that William composed which is as you may suppose a little enraged. This horrid fat simpliton says that my Aunt is beautifull which is intirely impossible for that is not her nature.'

What a peppery little pen we wield! What could that have been out of the Sardonic Dean? what other child of that age would have used 'beloved' as she does. This power of affection, this faculty of *be*loving, and wild hunger to be beloved, comes out more and more. She perilled her all upon it, and it may have been as well—we know, indeed, that it was far better—for her that this wealth of love was so soon withdrawn to its one only infinite Giver and Receiver. This must have been the law of her earthly life. Love was, indeed 'her Lord and King;' and it was perhaps well for her that she found so soon that her and our only Lord and King, Himself is Love.

Here are bits from her Diary at Braehead :—'The day of my existence here has been delightful and enchanting. On Saturday I expected no less than three well made Bucks the names of whom is here advertised. Mr. Geo. Crakey (Craigie), and Wm. Keith and Jn. Keith—the first is the funniest of every one of them. Mr. Crakey and walked to Crakyhall (Craigiehall) hand in hand in Innocence and matitation (meditation) sweet thinking on the kind love which flows in our tender hearted mind which is overflowing with majestic pleasure no one was ever so polite to me in the hole state of my existence. Mr. Craky you must know is a great Buck and pretty good-looking.

'I am at Ravelston enjoying nature's fresh air. The birds are singing sweetly—the calf doth frisk and nature shows her glorious face.'

Here is a confession :—'I confess I have been very more like a little young divil than a creature for when Isabella

went up stairs to teach me religion and my multiplication and to be good and all my other lessons I stamped with my foot and threw my new hat which she had made on the ground and was sulky and was dreadfully passionate, but she never whiped me but said Marjory go into another room and think what a great crime you are committing letting your temper git the better of you. But I went so sulkily that the Devil got the better of me but she never never never whips me so that I think I would be the better of it and the next time that I behave ill I think she should do it for she never never does it. . . . Isabella has given me praise for checking my temper for I was sulky even when she was kneeling an hole hour teaching me to write.'

Our poor little wifie, *she* has no doubts of the personality of the Devil! 'Yesterday I behave extremely ill in God's most holy church for I would never attend myself nor let Isabella attend which was a great crime for she often, often tells me that when to or three are geathered together God is in the midst of them, and it was the very same Divil that tempted Job that tempted me I am sure; but he resisted Satan though he had boils and many many other misfortunes which I have escaped. . . . I am now going to tell you the horible and wretched plaege (plague) that my multiplication gives me you can't conceive it the most Devilish thing is 8 times 8 and 7 times 7 it is what nature itself cant endure.'

This is delicious; and what harm is there in her 'Devilish?' it is strong language merely; even old Rowland Hill used to say 'he grudged the Devil those rough and ready words.' 'I walked to that delightful place Crakyhall with a delightful young man beloved by all his friends espacially by me his loveress, but I must not talk any more about him for Isa said it is not proper for to speak of gentalmen but I will never forget him! . . . I am very very glad

that satan has not given me boils and many other misfortunes—In the holy bible these words are written that the Devil goes like a roaring lyon in search of his pray but the lord lets us escape from him but we' (*pauvre petite !*) 'do not strive with this awfull Spirit. . . . To-day I pronunced a word which should never come out of a lady's lips it was that I called John a Impudent Bitch. I will tell you what I think made me in so bad a humor is I got one or two of that bad bad sina (senna) tea to-day,'—a better excuse for bad humour and bad language than most.

She has been reading the Book of Esther: 'It was a dreadful thing that Haman was hanged on the very gallows which he had prepared for Mordeca to hang him and his ten sons thereon and it was very wrong and cruel to hang his sons for they did not commit the crime; *but then Jesus was not then come to teach us to be merciful.*' This is wise and beautiful—has upon it the very dew of youth and of holiness. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings He perfects His praise.

'This is Saturday and I am very glad of it because I have play half the Day and I get money too but alas I owe Isabella 4 pence for I am finned 2 pence whenever I bite my nails. Isabella is teaching me to make simme colings nots of interrigations peorids commoes, etc. . . . As this is Sunday I will meditate upon Senciable and Religious subjects. First I should be very thankful I am not a begger.'

This amount of meditation and thankfulness seems to have been all she was able for.

'I am going to-morrow to a delightfull place, Braehead by name, belonging to Mrs. Crraford, where there is ducks cocks hens bubblyjocks 2 dogs 2 cats and swine which is delightful. I think it is shocking to think that the dog and cat should bear them' (this is a meditation physiological),

'and they are drowned after all. I would rather have a man-dog than a woman-dog, because they do not bear like women-dogs; it is a hard case—it is shocking. I cam here to enjoy natures delightful breath it is sweeter than a fial (phial) of rose oil.'

Braehead is the farm the historical Jock Howison asked and got from our gay James the Fifth, 'the gudeman o' Ballengiech,' as a reward for the services of his flail when the King had the worst of it at Cramond Brig with the gipsies. The farm is unchanged in size from that time, and still in the unbroken line of the ready and victorious thrasher. Braehead is held on the condition of the possessor being ready to present the King with a ewer and basin to wash his hands, Jock having done this for his unknown king after the *splore,* and when George the Fourth came to Edinburgh this ceremony was performed in silver at Holyrood. It is a lovely neuk this Braehead, preserved almost as it was 200 years ago. 'Lot and his wife' mentioned by Maidie—two quaintly cropped yew-trees—still thrive, the burn runs as it did in her time, and sings the same quiet tune—as much the same and as different as *Now* and *Then.* The house full of old family relics and pictures, the sun shining on them through the small deep windows with their plate glass; and there, blinking at the sun, and chattering contentedly, is a parrot, that might, for its looks of eld, have been in the ark, and domineered over and *deaved* the dove. Everything about the place is old and fresh.

This is beautiful :—'I am very sorry to say that I forgot God—that is to say I forgot to pray to-day and Isabella told me that I should be thankful that God did not forget me—if he did, O what become of me if I was in danger and God not friends with me—I must go to unquenchable fire and if I was tempted to sin—how could I resist it O no I will

never do it again—no no—if I can help it.' (Canny wee wifie!) 'My religion is greatly falling off because I dont pray with so much attention when I am saying my prayers, and my charecter is lost among the Braehead people. I hope I will be religious again—but as for regaining my charecter I despare for it.' (Poor little 'habit and repute!')

Her temper, her passion, and her 'badness' are almost daily confessed and deplored :—'I will never again trust to my own power, for I see that I cannot be good without God's assistance—I will not trust in my own selfe, and Isa's health will be quite ruined by me—it will indeed.' 'Isa has giving me advice, which is, that when I feal Satan beginning to tempt me, that I flea him and he would flea me.' 'Remorse is the worst thing to bear, and I am afraid that I will fall a marter to it.'

Poor dear little sinner!—Here comes the world again :—'In my travels I met with a handsome lad named Charles Balfour Esq., and from him I got ofers of marage—offers of marage, did I say? Nay plenty heard me.' A fine scent for 'breach of promise!'

This is abrupt and strong :—'The Divil is curced and all works. 'Tis a fine work *Newton on the profecies.* I wonder if there is another book of poems comes near the Bible. The Divil always girns at the sight of the Bible.' 'Miss Potune' (her 'simpliton' friend) 'is very fat; she pretends to be very learned. She says she saw a stone that dropt from the skies; but she is a good Christian.' Here come her views on church government :—'An Annibabtist is a thing I am not a member of—I am a Pisplekan (Episcopalian) just now, and' (Oh you little Laodicean and Latitudinarian!) 'a Prisbeteran at Kirkcaldy!'—(*Blandula! Vagula! cœlum et animum mutas quæ trans mare* (i.e., *trans Bodotriam*)*-curris!*)—'my native town.' 'Sentiment is

not what I am acquainted with as yet, though I wish it, and should like to practise it' (!) 'I wish I had a great, great deal of gratitude in my heart, in all my body.' 'There is a new novel published, named *Self-Control* (Mrs. Brunton's)—'a very good maxim forsooth!' This is shocking: 'Yesterday a marrade man, named Mr. John Balfour, Esq., offered to kiss me, and offered to marry me, though the man' (a fine directness this!) 'was espused, and his wife was present and said he must ask her permission; but he did not. I think he was ashamed and confounded before 3 gentelman —Mr. Jobson and 2 Mr. Kings.' 'Mr. Banester's' (Bannister's) 'Budjet is to-night; I hope it will be a good one. A great many authors have expressed themselves too sentimentally.' You are right, Marjorie. 'A Mr. Burns writes a beautiful song on Mr. Cunhaming, whose wife desarted him—truly it is a most beautiful one.' 'I like to read the Fabulous historys, about the histerys of Robin, Dickey, flapsay, and Peccay, and it is very amusing, for some were good birds and others bad, but Peccay was the most dutiful and obedient to her parients.' 'Thomson is a beautiful author, and Pope, but nothing to Shakespear, of which I have a little knolege. *Macbeth* is a pretty composition, but awful one.' 'The *Newgate Calender* is very instructive' (!) 'A sailor called here to say farewell; it must be dreadful to leave his native country when he might get a wife; or perhaps me, for I love him very much. But O I forgot, Isabella forbid me to speak about love.' This antiphlogistic regimen and lesson is ill to learn by our Maidie, for here she sins again:—'Love is a very papithatick thing' (it is almost a pity to correct this into pathetic), 'as well as troublesome and tiresome—but O Isabella forbid me to speak of it.' Here are her reflections on a pine-apple:—'I think the price of a pine-apple is very dear: it is a whole

bright goulden guinea, that might have sustained a poor family.' Here is a new vernal simile :—'The hedges are sprouting like chicks from the eggs when they are newly hatched or, as the vulgar say, *clacked.*' 'Doctor Swift's works are very funny ; I got some of them by heart.' 'Moreheads sermons are I hear much praised, but I never read sermons of any kind ; but I read novelettes and my Bible, and I never forget it, or my prayers.' Bravo Marjorie !

She seems now, when still about six, to have broken out into song :—

'EPHIBOL (EPIGRAM OR EPITAPH—WHO KNOWS WHICH ?)
ON MY DEAR LOVE ISABELLA.

Here lies sweet Isabell in bed,
With a night-cap on her head ;
Her skin is soft, her face is fair,
And she has very pretty hair ;
She and I in bed lies nice,
And undisturbed by rats or mice ;
She is disgusted with Mr. Worgan,
Though he plays upon the organ.
Her nails are neat, her teeth are white,
Her eyes are very, very bright ;
In a conspicuous town she lives,
And to the poor her money gives :
Here ends sweet Isabella's story,
And may it be much to her glory.'

Here are some bits at random :—

'Of summer I am very fond,
And love to bathe into a pond ;
The look of sunshine dies away,
And will not let me out to play ;
I love the morning's sun to spy
Glittering through the casement's eye,
The rays of light are very sweet,
And puts away the taste of meat ;
The balmy breeze comes down from heaven,
And makes us like for to be living.'

'The casawary is an curious bird, and so is the gigantic

crane, and the pelican of the wilderness, whose mouth holds a bucket of fish and water. Fighting is what ladies is not qualyfied for, they would not make a good figure in battle or in a duel. Alas! we females are of little use to our country. The history of all the malcontents as ever was hanged is amusing.' Still harping on the Newgate Calendar!

'Braehead is extremely pleasant to me by the companie of swine, geese, cocks, etc., and they are the delight of my soul.'

'I am going to tell you of a melancholy story. A young turkie of 2 or 3 months old, would you believe it, the father broke its leg, and he killed another! I think he ought to be transported or hanged.'

'Queen Street is a very gay one, and so is Princes Street, for all the lads and lasses, besides bucks and beggars, parade there.'

'I should like to see a play very much, for I never saw one in all my life, and don't believe I ever shall; but I hope I can be content without going to one. I can be quite happy without my desire being granted.'

'Some days ago Isabella had a terrible fit of the tooth-ake, and she walked with a long night-shift at dead of night like a ghost, and I thought she was one. She prayed for nature's sweet restorer—balmy sleep—but did not get it—a ghostly figure indeed she was, enough to make a saint tremble. It made me quiver and shake from top to toe. Superstition is a very mean thing, and should be despised and shunned.'

Here is her weakness and her strength again :—'In the love-novels all the heroines are very desperate. Isabella will not allow me to speak about lovers and heroins, and 'tis too refined for my taste.' 'Miss Egward's (Edgeworth's) tails are very good, particularly some that are very much

adapted for youth (!) as Laz Laurance and Tarelton, False Keys, etc. etc.'

'Tom Jones and Grey's Elegey in a country churchyard are both excellent, and much spoke of by both sex, particularly by the men.' Are our Marjories now-a-days better or worse because they cannot read Tom Jones unharmed? More better than worse; but who among them can repeat Gray's Lines on a distant prospect of Eton College as could our Maidie?

Here is some more of her prattle:—'I went into Isabella's bed to make her smile like the Genius Demedicus' (the Venus de Medicis) 'or the statute in an ancient Greece, but she fell asleep in my very face, at which my anger broke forth, so that I awoke her from a comfortable nap. All was now hushed up again, but again my anger burst forth at her biding me get up.'

She begins thus loftily:—

> 'Death the righteous love to see,
> But from it doth the wicked flee.'

Then suddenly breaks off (as if with laughter)—

> 'I am sure they fly as fast as their legs can carry them!'
>
> 'There is a thing I love to see,
> That is our monkey catch a flee.'
>
> 'I love in Isa's bed to lie,
> Oh, such a joy and luxury!
> The bottom of the bed I sleep,
> And with great care within I creep;
> Oft I embrace her feet of lillys,
> But she has goton all the pillys.
> Her neck I never can embrace,
> But I do hug her feet in place.'

How childish and yet how strong and free is her use of words!—'I lay at the foot of the bed because Isabella said I disturbed her by continial fighting and kicking, but I was very dull, and continially at work reading the Arabian Nights,

which I could not have done if I had slept at the top. I am reading the Mysteries of Udolpho. I am much interested in the fate of poor, poor Emily.'

Here is one of her swains—

'Very soft and white his cheeks,
His hair is red, and grey his breeks;
His tooth is like the daisy fair,
His only fault is in his hair.'

This is a higher flight :—

'DEDICATED TO MRS. H. CRAWFORD BY THE AUTHOR, M. F.

Three turkeys fair their last have breathed,
And now this world for ever leaved;
Their father, and their mother too,
They sigh and weep as well as you;
Indeed, the rats their bones have crunched,
Into eternity theire laanched.
A direful death indeed they had,
As wad put any parent mad;
But she was more than usual calm,
She did not give a single dam.'

This last word is saved from all sin by its tender age, not to speak of the want of the *n*. We fear 'she' is the abandoned mother, in spite of her previous sighs and tears.

'Isabella says when we pray we should pray fervently, and not rattel over a prayer—for that we are kneeling at the footstool of our Lord and Creator, who saves us from eternal damnation, and from unquestionable fire and brimston.'

She has a long poem on Mary Queen of Scots :

'Queen Mary was much loved by all,
Both by the great and by the small,
But hark! her soul to heaven doth rise!
And I suppose she has gained a prize—
For I do think she would not go
Into the *awful* place below;
There is a thing that I must tell,
Elizabeth went to fire and hell;
He who would teach her to be civil,
It must be her great friend the divil!'

She hits off Darnley well :—

> 'A noble's son, a handsome lad,
> By some queer way or other, had
> Got quite the better of her heart,
> With him she always talked apart;
> Silly he was, but very fair,
> A greater buck was not found there.'

'By some queer way or other;' is not this the general case and the mystery, young ladies and gentlemen? Goethe's doctrine of 'elective affinities' discovered by our Pet Maidie.

SONNET TO A MONKEY.

> 'O lively, O most charming pug
> Thy graceful air, and heavenly mug;
> The beauties of his mind do shine,
> And every bit is shaped and fine.
> Your teeth are whiter than the snow,
> Your a great buck, your a great beau;
> Your eyes are of so nice a shape,
> More like a Christian's than an ape;
> Your cheek is like the rose's blume,
> Your hair is like the raven's plume;
> His nose's cast is of the Roman,
> He is a very pretty woman.
> I could not get a rhyme for Roman,
> So was obliged to call him woman.'

This last joke is good. She repeats it when writing of James the Second being killed at Roxburgh :—

> 'He was killed by a cannon splinter,
> Quite in the middle of the winter;
> Perhaps it was not at that time,
> But I can get no other rhyme!'

Here is one of her last letters, dated Kirkcaldy, 12th October 1811. You can see how her nature is deepening and enriching :—'MY DEAR MOTHER,—You will think that I entirely forget you but I assure you that you are greatly mistaken. I think of you always and often sigh to think of the distance between us two loving creatures of nature. We have regular hours for all our occupations first at 7

o'clock we go to the dancing and come home at 8 we then read our Bible and get our repeating and then play till ten then we get our music till 11 when we get our writing and accounts we sew from 12 till 1 after which I get my gramer and then work till five. At 7 we come and knit till 8 when we dont go to the dancing. This is an exact description. I must take a hasty farewell to her whom I love, reverence and doat on and who I hope thinks the same of

'MARJORY FLEMING.

'*P.S.*—An old pack of cards (!) would be very exeptible.'

This other is a month earlier :—'MY DEAR LITTLE MAMA, —I was truly happy to hear that you were all well. We are surrounded with measles at present on every side, for the Herons got it, and Isabella Heron was near Death's Door, and one night her father lifted her out of bed, and she fell down as they thought lifeless. Mr. Heron said, "That lassie's deed noo"—"I'm no deed yet." She then threw up a big worm nine inches and a half long. I have begun dancing, but am not very fond of it, for the boys strikes and mocks me.—I have been another night at the dancing; I like it better. I will write to you as often as I can; but I am afraid not every week. *I long for you with the longings of a child to embrace you—to fold you in my arms. I respect you with all the respect due to a mother. You dont know how I love you. So I shall remain, your loving child*— M. FLEMING.'

What rich involution of love in the words marked! Here are some lines to her beloved Isabella, in July 1811 :—

'There is a thing that I do want,
With you these beauteous walks to haunt,
We would be happy if you would
Try to come over if you could.

Then I would all quite happy be
Now and for all eternity.
My mother is so very sweet,
And checks my appetite to eat;
My father shows us what to do;
But O I'm sure that I want you.
I have no more of poetry;
O Isa do remember me,
And try to love your Marjory.'

In a letter from 'Isa' to

'Miss Muff Maidie Marjory Fleming,
favored by Rare Rear-Admiral Fleming,'

She says—'I long much to see you, and talk over all our old stories together, and to hear you read and repeat. I am pining for my old friend Cesario, and poor Lear, and wicked Richard. How is the dear Multiplication table going on? are you still as much attached to 9 times 9 as you used to be?'

But this dainty, bright thing is about to flee—to come 'quick to confusion.' The measles she writes of seized her, and she died on the 19th of December 1811. The day before her death, Sunday, she sat up in bed, worn and thin, her eye gleaming as with the light of a coming world, and with a tremulous, old voice repeated the following lines by Burns—heavy with the shadow of death, and lit with the phantasy of the judgment-seat—the publican's prayer in paraphrase:—

'Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms?
Some drops of joy, with draughts of ill between,
Some gleams of sunshine mid renewing storms.
Is it departing pangs my soul alarms?
Or death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?
For guilt, for GUILT my terrors are in arms;
I tremble to approach an angry God,
And justly smart beneath his sin-avenging rod.

Fain would I say, forgive my foul offence,
Fain promise never more to disobey;

But should my Author health again dispense,
Again I might forsake fair virtue's way,
Again in folly's path might go astray,
Again exalt the brute and sink the man.
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,
Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan,
Who sin so oft have mourned, yet to temptation ran?

O thou great Governor of all below,
If I might dare a lifted eye to thee,
Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,
And still the tumult of the raging sea;
With that controlling power assist even me
Those headstrong furious passions to confine.
For all unfit I feel my powers to be
To rule their torrent in the allowed line;
O aid me with thy help, OMNIPOTENCE DIVINE.'

It is more affecting than we care to say to read her Mother's and Isabella Keith's letters written immediately after her death. Old and withered, tattered and pale they are now: but when you read them, how quick, how throbbing with life and love! how rich in that language of affection which only women, and Shakspere, and Luther can use—that power of detaining the soul over the beloved object and its loss.

'*K. Philip to Constance*—
You are as fond of grief as of your child.
Const.—Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me;
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form.
Then I have reason to be fond of grief.'

What variations cannot love play on this one string!

In her first letter to Miss Keith, Mrs. Fleming says of her dead Maidie:—'Never did I behold so beautiful an object. It resembled the finest wax-work. There was in the countenance an expression of sweetness and serenity which seemed to indicate that the pure spirit had anticipated the joys of heaven ere it quitted the mortal frame.

To tell you what your Maidie said of you would fill volumes; for you was the constant theme of her discourse, the subject of her thoughts, and ruler of her actions. The last time she mentioned you was a few hours before all sense save that of suffering was suspended, when she said to Dr. Johnstone, 'If you will let me out at the New Year, I will be quite contented.' I asked what made her so anxious to get out then? 'I want to purchase a New Year's gift for Isa Keith with the sixpence you gave me for being patient in the measles; and I would like to choose it myself.' I do not remember her speaking afterwards, except to complain of her head, till just before she expired, when she articulated, "O, mother! mother!"'

Do we make too much of this little child, who has been in her grave in Abbotshall Kirkyard these fifty and more years? We may of her cleverness—not of her affectionateness, her nature. What a picture the *animosa infans* gives us of herself, her vivacity, her passionateness, her precocious love-making, her passion for nature, for swine, for all living things, her reading, her turn for expression, her satire, her frankness, her little sins and rages, her great repentances! We don't wonder Walter Scott carried her off in the neuk of his plaid, and played himself with her for hours.

The year before she died, when in Edinburgh, she was at a Twelfth Night supper at Scott's, in Castle Street. The company had all come—all but Marjorie. Scott's familiars, whom we all know, were there—all were come but Marjorie; and all were dull because Scott was dull. 'Where's that bairn? what can have come over her? I'll go myself and see.' And he was getting up, and would have gone; when the bell rang, and in came Duncan Roy and his henchman Tougald, with the sedan chair, which was brought right into

the lobby, and its top raised. And there, in its darkness and dingy old cloth, sat Maidie in white, her eyes gleaming, and Scott bending over her in ecstasy—'hung over her enamoured.' 'Sit ye there, my dautie, till they all see you;' and forthwith he brought them all. You can fancy the scene. And he lifted her up and marched to his seat with her on his stout shoulder, and set her down beside him; and then began the night, and such a night! Those who knew Scott best said, that night was never equalled; Maidie and he were the stars; and she gave them *Constance's* speeches and *Helvellyn*, the ballad then much in vogue—and all her *répertoire*—Scott showing her off, and being ofttimes rebuked by her for his intentional blunders.

We are indebted for the following—and our readers will be not unwilling to share our obligations—to her sister:—'Her birth was 15th January 1803; her death 19th December 1811. I take this from her Bibles.[1] I believe she was a child of robust health, of much vigour of body, and beautifully formed arms, and until her last illness, never was an hour in bed. She was niece to Mrs. Keith, residing in No. 1, North Charlotte Street, who was *not* Mrs. Murray Keith, although very intimately acquainted with that old lady. My aunt was a daughter of Mr. James Rae, surgeon, and married the younger son of old Keith of Ravelstone. Corstorphine Hill belonged to my aunt's husband; and his eldest son, Sir Alexander Keith, succeeded his uncle to both Ravelstone and Dunnottar. The Keiths were not connected by relationship with the Howisons of Braehead, but my grandfather and grandmother (who was), a daughter of Cant of Thurston and Giles-Grange, were on the most in-

[1] 'Her Bible is before me; *a pair*, as then called; the faded marks are just as she placed them. There is one at David's lament over Jonathan.'

timate footing with *our* Mrs. Keith's grandfather and grandmother; and so it has been for three generations, and the friendship consummated by my cousin William Keith marrying Isabella Craufurd.

'As to my aunt and Scott, they were on a very intimate footing. He asked my aunt to be godmother to his eldest daughter Sophia Charlotte. I had a copy of Miss Edgeworth's "Rosamond, and Harry and Lucy" for long, which was "a gift to Marjorie from Walter Scott," probably the first edition of that attractive series, for it wanted "Frank," which is always now published as part of the series, under the title of *Early Lessons*. I regret to say these little volumes have disappeared.

'Sir Walter was no relation of Marjorie's, but of the Keiths, through the Swintons; and, like Marjorie, he stayed much at Ravelstone in his early days, with his grandaunt Mrs. Keith; and it was while seeing him there as a boy, that another aunt of mine composed, when he was about fourteen, the lines prognosticating his future fame that Lockhart ascribes in his Life to Mrs. Cockburn, authoress of "The Flowers of the Forest":—

> 'Go on, dear youth, the glorious path pursue
> Which bounteous Nature kindly smooths for you;
> Go bid the seeds her hands have sown arise,
> By timely culture, to their native skies;
> Go, and employ the poet's heavenly art,
> Not merely to delight, but mend the heart.'

Mrs. Keir was my aunt's name, another of Dr. Rae's daughters.' We cannot better end than in words from this same pen:—'I have to ask you to forgive my anxiety in gathering up the fragments of Marjorie's last days, but I have an almost sacred feeling to all that pertains to her. You are quite correct in stating that measles were the cause of her death. My mother was struck by the patient quiet-

ness manifested by Marjorie during this illness, unlike her ardent, impulsive nature; but love and poetic feeling were unquenched. When Dr. Johnstone rewarded her submissiveness with a sixpence, the request speedily followed that she might get out ere New Year's day came. When asked why she was so desirous of getting out, she immediately rejoined, "Oh, I am so anxious to buy something with my sixpence for my dear Isa Keith." Again, when lying very still, her mother asked her if there was anything she wished: "Oh yes! if you would just leave the room door open a wee bit, and play 'The Land o' the Leal,' and I will lie and *think*, and enjoy myself' (this is just as stated to me by her mother and mine). Well, the happy day came, alike to parents and child, when Marjorie was allowed to come forth from the nursery to the parlour. It was Sabbath evening, and after tea. My father, who idolized this child, and never afterwards in my hearing mentioned her name, took her in his arms; and while walking her up and down the room, she said, "Father, I will repeat something to you; what would you like?" He said, "Just choose yourself, Maidie." She hesitated for a moment between the paraphrase, "Few are thy days, and full of woe," and the lines of Burns already quoted, but decided on the latter, a remarkable choice for a child. The repeating these lines seemed to stir up the depths of feeling in her soul. She asked to be allowed to write a poem; there was a doubt whether it would be right to allow her, in case of hurting her eyes. She pleaded earnestly, "Just this once;" the point was yielded, her slate was given her, and with great rapidity she wrote an address of fourteen lines, "to her loved cousin on the author's recovery," her last work on earth:—

"Oh! Isa, pain did visit me,
I was at the last extremity;

How often did I think of you,
I wished your graceful form to view,
To clasp you in my weak embrace,
Indeed I thought I'd run my race:
Good care, I'm sure, was of me taken,
But still indeed I was much shaken,
At last I daily strength did gain,
And oh! at last, away went pain;
At length the doctor thought I might
Stay in the parlor all the night;
I now continue so to do,
Farewell to Nancy and to you."

'She went to bed apparently well, awoke in the middle of the night with the old cry of woe to a mother's heart, "My head, my head!" Three days of the dire malady, "water in the head," followed, and the end came.'

'Soft, silken primrose, fading timelessly.'

It is needless, it is impossible, to add anything to this: the fervour, the sweetness, the flush of poetic ecstasy, the lovely and glowing eye, the perfect nature of that bright and warm intelligence, that darling child,—Lady Nairne's words, and the old tune, stealing up from the depths of the human heart, deep calling unto deep, gentle and strong like the waves of the great sea hushing themselves to sleep in the dark;—the words of Burns, touching the kindred chord, her last numbers 'wildly sweet' traced, with thin and eager fingers, already touched by the last enemy and friend,—*moriens canit*,—and that love which is so soon to be her everlasting light, is her song's burden to the end,

'She set as sets the morning star, which goes
Not down behind the darkened west, nor hides
Obscured among the tempests of the sky,
But melts away into the light of heaven.'

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